

# **KNOB NOSTER STATE PARK**

## ***PREAMBLE AND MISSION STATEMENT***

**September 2021**

### **HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:**

Knob Noster State Park was originally created by the National Park Service in the 1930s as the Montserrat Recreation Demonstration Area, named due to its proximity to the town of Montserrat. The park was developed to demonstrate how marginal agricultural land that had been disturbed could be reclaimed for recreation and conservation purposes. The area would provide much needed recreational opportunities for those living in Kansas City and the surrounding area; away from possible threats of construction and urban sprawl.

As part of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal programs, the newly-elected President signed the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) Act in 1933. The ECW included several agencies such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA; renamed in 1939 as the Work Projects Administration). The ECW provided relief for unemployed workers and farmers while improving and building new structures throughout the United States. The WPA was responsible for the construction of 110,000 buildings across the nation.

During the Great Depression, the WPA began to work on the area's development. From 1938 to 1941, WPA workers transformed what had been exhausted farm and mining land into the Montserrat Recreational Demonstration Area. Development included four artificial lakes, two organized group camping facilities, service buildings, the caretaker's residence, bridges, a picnic shelter, entrance gates, and the park office. Plans originally called for building two additional organized group camping facilities in the area. However, these were never constructed. In addition, during the course of development 315 acres of trees were seeded and planted, 20 acres of land were seeded with various flora, and around 10 miles of foot trails were constructed. Approximately 200 people (mostly unskilled labor) were involved in the area's development and administration. Though World War II significantly delayed construction, the project was finished in 1946.

On October 10, 1946 the Montserrat Recreational Demonstration Area became part of the Missouri State Park system and was renamed Knob Noster State Park for the nearby town. Knob Noster State Park is the only park in the system developed solely by WPA workers and still has many of the rustic buildings. One of the organized group camps and five other structures were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1985; the entirety of Camp Shawnee is now considered a Historic District.

The park is located in the Osage Plains area of the state, which is dominated by historic prairie plains. Clearfork Creek, which meanders through the park, has had a great influence on the landscape characteristics. The area surrounding the creek is dissected and hilly with a wide

corridor of trees. The woodland structure and old growth post oaks bear testament to this landscape being historically the matrix between prairie, savanna, and woodland. Today, after many years of regularly occurring prescribed fire, Knob Noster State Park harbors great examples of this historic woodland interface.

Knob Noster State Park offers numerous resources to park visitors. Cultural resources that can be found at Knob Noster State Park revolve around the WPA structures throughout the park. These structures reflect the rustic architectural style for which the National Park Service is known.

Although most of the park had been extensively farmed and/or strip mined prior to becoming public land, there are several areas of natural resource significance. These areas include Pin Oak Slough, Christopher Woods, and Clearfork Woodland. Pin Oak Slough is a recognized Natural Area that is home to many wetland flora and fauna. Christopher Woods is the largest contiguous tract of old oak and hickory forest in the park. Clearfork Open Woodland is one area of the park that is maintained through prescribed burns to restore the open woodland that would have been present in the park area prior to European settlement. Other managed areas include Opossum Hollow Woodland, North Loop Grassland, Kiosk Grassland, and Clearfork Grassland.

Recreational resources that can be found at Knob Noster State Park include a family campground with sixty-two campsites, a special-use camping area that can accommodate two hundred people, two organized group camps that will each accommodate approximately one-hundred fifty people, and two pack-in camp sites on the McAdoo Trail system. The park also offers seven trails for hiking for a distance of nearly 19 miles. All trails are open to hiking, while the McAdoo Trail system is open to equestrian users and the Opossum Hollow Trail is open to bicyclists. The park also offers lake fishing, ball courts, kayak rentals, and horseshoe pits. There are three open shelters available by reservation or on a first-come, first-served basis.

Special management responsibilities at Knob Noster State Park include a lease with Whiteman Air Force Base. The lease is on a 50-year renewal period, which started in 1955 and was renewed again in 2005. The base leases the land for use as a golf course (Royal Oaks Golf Course). The park is also impacted by the close proximity of Whiteman Air Force Base due to frequent use by visitors to the base. Knob Noster State Park also has multiple entrances from State Route DD, running through the center of the park. The park is also located adjacent to State Route 23.

## **MISSION STATEMENT:**

The mission of Knob Noster State Park is to preserve and interpret the unique flora, fauna, and natural features created by the Clearfork Watershed; to preserve and interpret the cultural landmarks credited to the 1930's development of Montserrat Recreational Demonstration Area; and to provide safe, healthy, enjoyable outdoor recreation opportunities.

**KNOB NOSTER  
STATE PARK**

***PREAMBLE AND MISSION STATEMENT***

**September 2021**

**APPROVED BY:**

  
**David Kelly**  
Director, Missouri State Parks

10/10/21  
Date

  
**Terry Bruns**  
Program Director, Planning and Development

10/13/2021  
Date

  
**Dustin Webb**  
Director, Northern Region

11-08-2021  
Date

  
**Melanie Robinson-Smith**  
Deputy Regional Director, Northern Region

10/13/21  
Date

  
**Daniel Brigman**  
Park Superintendent

October 13, 2021  
Date

# **KNOB NOSTER STATE PARK**

## ***CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN***

**September 2021**

**Location:** Johnson County

**Established:** 1946

**Size:** 3,934.38 Acres

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The primary mission of Knob Noster State Park is to preserve and interpret the unique flora, fauna, and natural features created by the Clearfork Watershed; to preserve and interpret the cultural landmarks credited to the 1930's development of Montserrat Recreational Demonstration Area; and to provide safe, healthy, enjoyable outdoor recreation opportunities.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Located in eastern Johnson County, west of Knob Noster and Whiteman Air Force Base, Knob Noster State Park exemplifies years of rehabilitation and restoration efforts turning this once disturbed landscape into a recreational area. The park's natural environment is greatly influenced by Clearfork Creek, supporting dissected and hilly corridors of dense second and third growth timber. Notable habitat found within the park's boundary include old oak and hickory woodlands, grasslands, wetland, oxbow slough, and lakes.

Knob Noster State Park still displays many of the rustic buildings originally built by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), reflecting the simplistic architecture which the National Park Service is known for. In 1983, the Camp Shawnee Historic District and five non-contiguous sites were nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. The five sites include the entrance portal, the bridge on the entrance road, the warehouse and repair shop, Lake Buteo dam and spillway, and the stone restroom near the WPA shelter.

### **SITE GOALS**

- Preserve the natural and cultural resources located within the park's boundaries;
- Provide recreational opportunities and public use facilities compatible with the park's mission, resources, and public needs;
- Provide adequate orientation and interpretive facilities to enhance visitor experience;
- Provide administrative support facilities to ensure successful operation and maintenance of the park.

## INTERPRETIVE THEMES

- The unique flora, fauna, and natural features created by the Clearfork Watershed;
- Cultural landmarks credited to the 1930's development of Montserrat Recreational Demonstration Area;
- Pre-park settlement and reasons for development into a park;
- Connection to Warrensburg, Knob Noster, and Johnson County, as a whole.

## SITE STRUCTURES

Knob Noster State Park encompasses eighty structures, forty-eight of which are considered historic and thirty-one are on the National Register of Historic Places; the majority being built in the 1930's by the WPA.

- Shawnee Group Camp (*circa 1935-1939*)
  - Administration (2)\*
  - Cabin (18)\*
  - Dining Lodge (1)\*
  - Recreation Lodge (2)\*
  - Shower House (6)\*
  - Staff Cabins (4)\*
  - Well House (1)
- Bobwhite Group Camp (*circa 1934-1971*)
  - Administration (1)
  - Cabin (6)
  - Dining Lodge (1)
  - Recreation Lodge (1)
  - Shower House (1)
  - Staff Cabin (3)
  - Restroom (1)
  - Well House (1)
- Support Structures (*circa 1935-2018*)
  - Check Station (1)
  - Outbuilding (1)
  - Picnic Shelter Open (3)
  - Residence (2)
  - Restroom (2)
  - Service Building (1)
  - Shower House (2)
  - Storage Building (9)\*
  - Vault Toilet (7)
  - Visitor Center (1)
  - Well House (2)

*\*listed on the National Register of Historic Places*

*Please reference the CAMP Inventory for further information*

## DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

To best support preservation and interpretation efforts, development objectives should be carefully considered, ensuring they are compatible with the park's significant natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

## **Spirit Trail**

The continuation of the Spirit Trail is to be constructed from Knob Noster State Park's western boundary, extending east to the park's entrance at 871 RD, near the HWY DD/Route 23 intersection; providing connectivity from Whiteman Air Force Base to Warrensburg.

## **Camp Shawnee Historic District**

Due to the lack of a pool, user preference for Camp Bobwhite, and being "too spread out", usage of Shawnee Group Camp has decreased over the years. In an effort to increase attendance and revenue, Shawnee Group Camp is to be designated as a dual-use area (lodging/day-use). This designation will enable guests to rent individual camper cabins as well as facilities for group events, and will open the area to regular day-use.

## **McAdoo Trail Connector**

A connector trail is to be developed from the Shawnee Group Camp to the McAdoo Trail, providing equestrian access to the lodging/day-use area.

## **Special Considerations**

*Natural Area:* The area southwest of Camp Bobwhite (Christopher Woods) and northeast of the Clearfork Lake (Clearfork Bottom) have resource characteristics potential for natural area designations.

## **PROJECT PHASING**

1. Continuation of the Spirit Trail east through the park.
2. Designate Shawnee Group Camp as a lodging/day-use area.
3. Provide equestrian access to Shawnee Group Camp.

Resource and environmental clearances will be required before on-site modifications and development occur.

## **PLANNING AND RESEARCH GOALS**

- Update and/or completion of the General Management Plan.
- Continued documentary research and exploration of park's natural and cultural resources.

## **ACQUISITION UNITS**

If offered, acquisition of adjacent property may be pursued only through willing sellers or donors. To be considered, units should enhance the mission of Missouri State Parks through one of the following categories:

- Resource preservation and protection

- Recreational access and opportunity
- Management facilitation

## **CONTEXTUAL PLANNING INFORMATION**

### **Public Input**

Public input is an integral part of the CDP process. The following includes input opportunities throughout the planning process.

1. August 12, 2020: CDP Public Meeting #1 held at Knob Noster State Park
  - a. August 13, 2020 to September 11, 2020: Public input opportunity #1
2. June 8, 2021: CDP Public Meeting #2 (virtual)
  - a. June 8, 2021 to July 7, 2021: Public input opportunity #2

### **CDP Team Members**

- Dustin Webb – Northern Regional Director
- Melanie Robinson-Smith – Northern Region Deputy Regional Director
- Daniel Brigman – Park Superintendent
- Melissa Hall – Assistant Park Superintendent
- Chris Edmondson – Park Naturalist
- Allison Vaughn – Natural Resource Ecologist
- Kim Dillon – Cultural Resource Management Section Chief
- Michael Ohnersorgen – Cultural Resource Management Program Director
- Rachel Campbell - Archaeologist
- Terry Bruns – Planning and Development Program Director
- Don Stier – Design Section Chief
- Ryan Dunwoody – Planning Section Chief
- Rebecca Young – Outdoor Recreation Management Section Chief
- Ben Nagy – Trail Coordinator
- Brian Stith – Deputy Division Director
- David Kelly – Deputy Division Director
- Mike Sutherland – Division Director

## **APPENDIX**

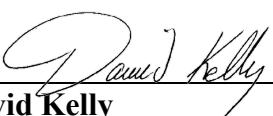
- CDP Map
- Public Meeting #1 Survey Results
- Public Meeting #2 Survey Results

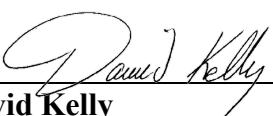
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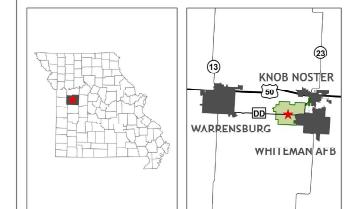
Projected Coordinate System:  
NAD 1983, UTM Zone 15N  
Contour Interval: 100 Feet  
Absolute Scale: 1:10,500



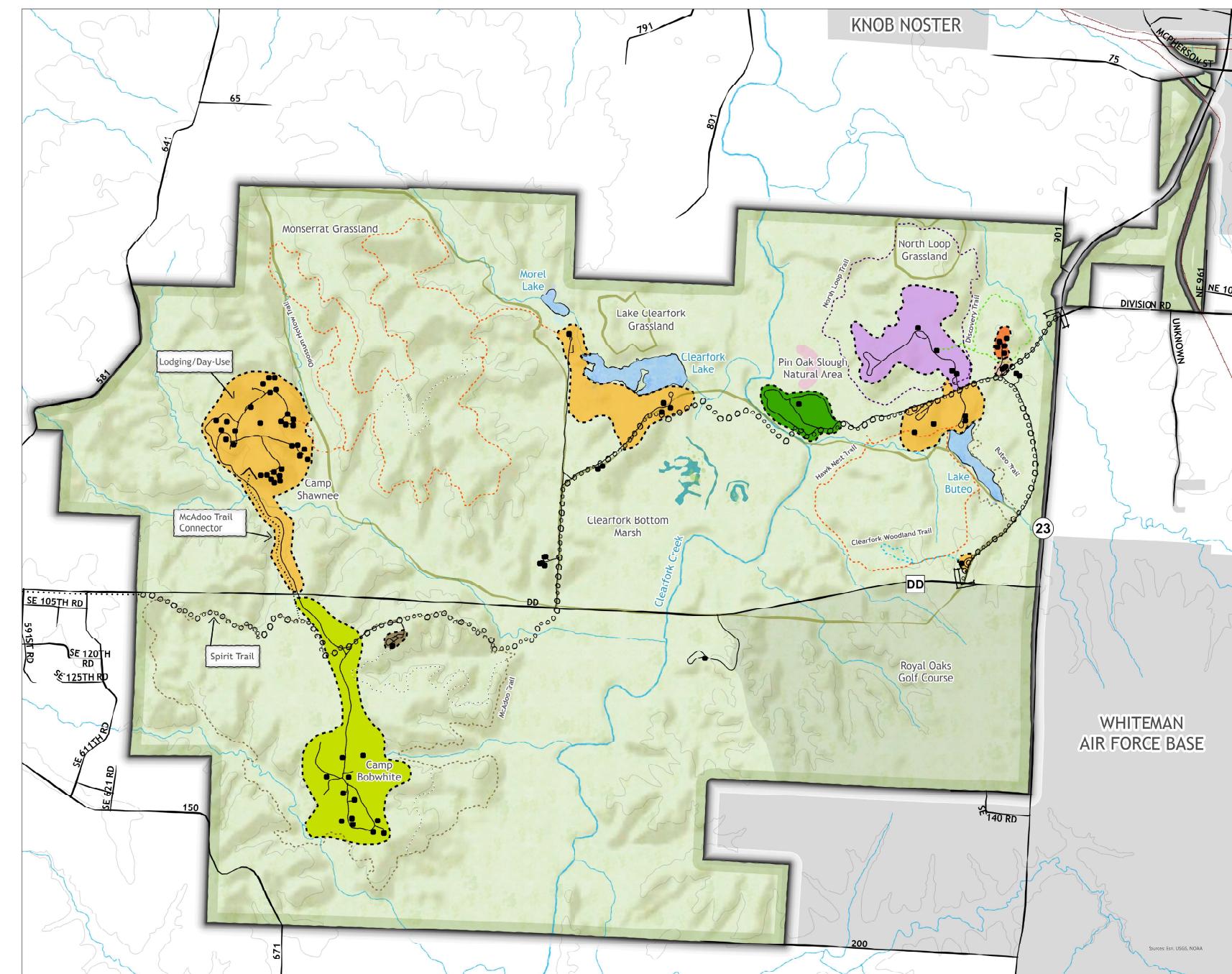
0 0.1 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 Miles

| Use Areas           | Landscape & Features                   |
|---------------------|--|
| Camping Area        | Wetland Restoration                    |
| Day Use Area        | Waterbody                              |
| Equestrian Use Area | Ecological Stewardship management unit |
| Group Camp          | Natural Area                           |
| Service Area        | Knob Noster State Park                 |
| Special Use Area    | Municipal Land                         |
| Visitor Center Area | Structure                              |
|                     | Contour 100 FT                         |
|                     | Road                                   |
|                     | Railroad                               |
|                     | Spirit Trail Finished                  |
|                     | Spirit Trail Proposed                  |
|                     | Equestrian Access                      |
|                     | Stream                                 |

CDP: September 2021

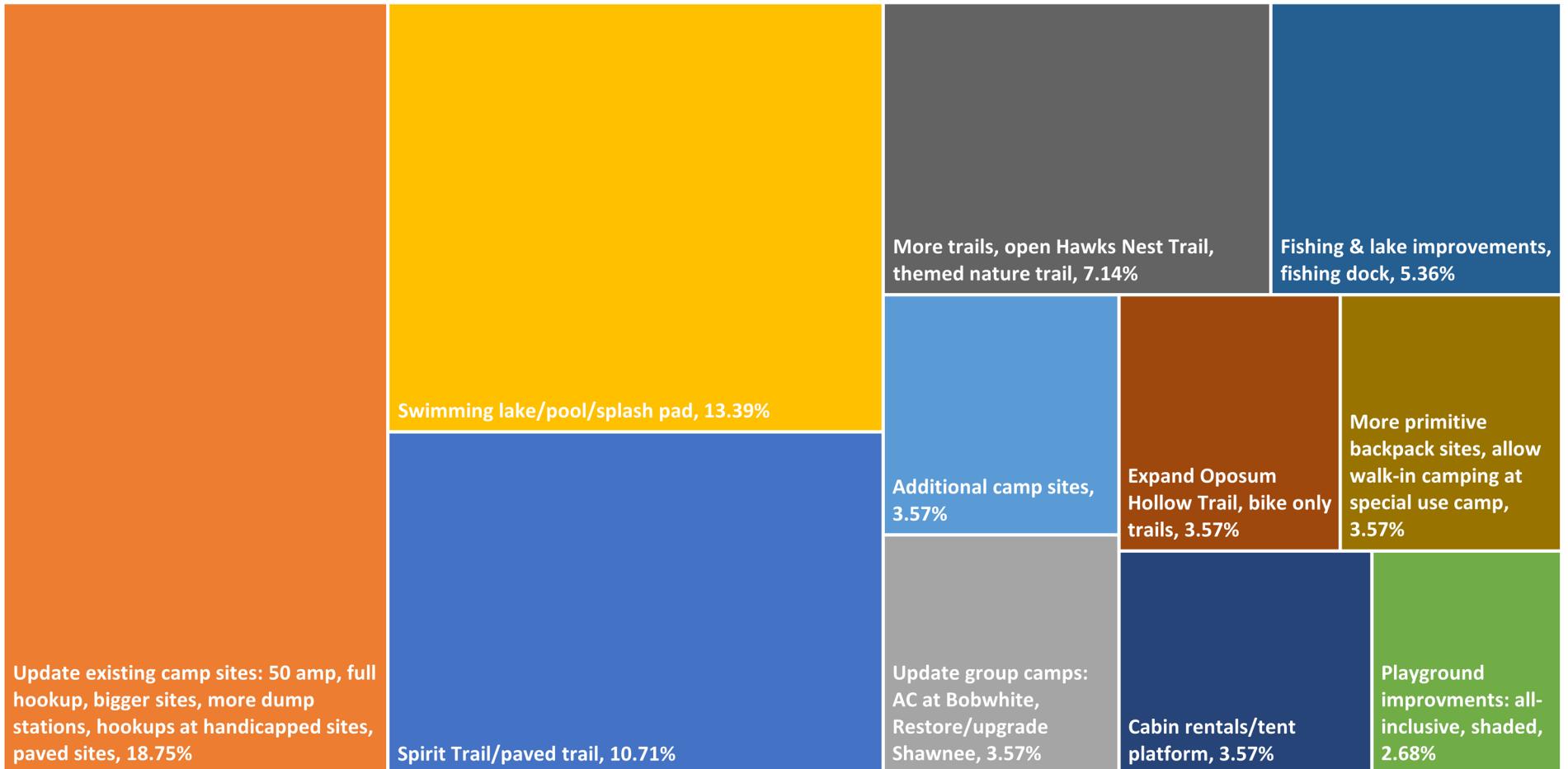


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## KNOB NOSTER STATE PARK

**Q:** What recreational activities and facilities, if any, do you feel are missing and should be added to this park or historic site to enhance the visitor experience?



**Comments/suggestions regarding Missouri State Parks:**

1. Keep up great work
2. Site is always clean and in good shape, even the trail areas susceptible to washing out.
3. I appreciate all the hard work that goes into keeping the parks clean and family friendly
4. Very pretty
5. Opossum hollow trail is great. Any enhancements to the trail would be welcome. I hope more Airmen from WAFB will help with maintenance. Perhaps MO SP can team up with WAFB outdoor rec for this.
6. We will be there in October, please don't remove the orienteering. That's why we picked this park.
7. We love going to Bennet Springs and Pomme de Terre because they offer things for kiddos besides biking/hiking
8. We love KNOB. It has been such a blessing to have somewhere close to be outside in a safe way during this pandemic. We have walked many trails and waded in the river many times.
9. Lake yucky to kayak in. KNOB is our favorite nearby park campground. We love the trails and wooded campsites
10. We love MSP! My husband and I both worked as seasonal for several years, and I love the spirit most employees have of wanting to create a fun and engaging place for visitors. MSP should hold more large events for the public. Keep up the good work!
11. Sites need to be made bigger for accommodating todays large campers. More full hookup sites. Better WiFi. A reservation system that allows for reservations to be made at the park office if there is on at the campground.
12. Ensure parks stay properly funded and maintained
13. Our family has not been to this park yet but we are always looking for new parks with camping, hiking, and some sort of water fun for the kids. A nice shower house/bathroom is always a great thing too.
14. Out of state campers should pay more... getting difficult to make reservations. Should go back to 6 month reservation window.
15. Thanks for the work you do!
16. Love hanging beautiful parks close by!
17. Clean tables and fire pits. Add water to each site. More dump stations

**18.** I really love the parks. And although we have always used the Knob Noster state park, this year it was especially a wonderful gift of outside activities. And we also were able to go to a few state parks in the south eastern part of the state around Eminence.

**19.** They are beautiful and should be preserved and maintained as they are; adding more manmade structures would be a disservice to their natural beauty.

**20.** 20 MPH speed limits should be enforced...too many fast drivers/tailgaters detract from park serenity.

**21.** The park is great

**22.** They are awesome and I prefer having hiking trails over big picnic/gathering sites

**23.** I would like to suggest adding a foldable Kayak Trolley Energy-saving Two-wheeled Carrier Cart for Kayak Canoe Boat, they are not expensive and as a 65 year old asthmatic it is not hard to get the kayak to the lake, but after paddling for an hour or so getting it back up the hill is hard.

**24.** My family has always enjoyed the park, but it has been a saving grace during COVID.

**25.** Great hosts always and it's always well kept!

**26.** Is it easy to fish from all sides of the lake?

**27.** Keep bikes off horse trails

**28.** This park has everything it needs for a nice getaway

**29.** I love Knob Noster. I like the additional signage at the state parks about history. Keep adding more.

**30.** No

**31.** Make the trails less mucky

**32.** The lake buteo trail is extremely muddy, and our area is full of families who would utilize this park more if the trail was accessible for more people.

**33.** Not at this time

**34.** Roads to the campground should be wider to accommodate campers easier and a vault toilet should be added to the back loop of the campground due to the number of primitive camp sites there.

**35.** More activities to do inside camping area

**36.** I have been to several. Keep up the good work

**37.** Connect the park from within. I shouldn't have to leave the park when going from buteo to Clearfork Creek. They should be connected.

**38.** Keep up the good work!

**39.** This, and all other MO State Parks I've visited are true gems. I am thrilled to have such beauty so easily accessible, and I hope we can maintain these for future generations to also enjoy.

**40.** Keep them as natural as possible

**41.** I love our state parks. Sometimes it's hard to find them. I'll be driving along and see one I didn't even know existed.

**42.** A large lake for boating and fishing. The area to the left of the Clearfork lake road behind the manager's house running north of the group camp could accommodate a lake of several hundred acres. This would enhance the park and bring in more usage. As the natural resource manager of the park from 1974 to 1978, I proposed this plan. It was looked at but was not acted on. Knob Noster needs a boost to increase the appeal of the park. This lake could give it.

**43.** This is a beautiful but unknown park. Would LOVE to see Spirit trail extended to park. Would be a huge boost to the park usage. I ride from Warrensburg to end of trail often but am afraid to ride on DD so the park when bicycling of not accessible.

**44.** I'm not a fan of every campsite reserved ahead of time, but I understand why you had to do it like this. I hope after this pandemic thing gets better controlled parks will allow first come first served sites again.

**45.** Keep them undeveloped. Prioritize primitive camping

**46.** We would love to kayak in the pond, however it has always been absolutely disgusting. The bugs around the area (ticks and mosquitoes) are almost unbearable. The campground is laid out perfectly and sites are nice and spacious, would love to see sewer and water at the sites for longer stays. We pretty much go here to do nothing because there's nothing to do unless you want to get eaten alive by ticks.

**47.** Bath house could use a renovation. It's in pretty bad shape. Love the hiking trails.

**48.** We love Missouri State Parks

**49.** I love them. It is great that they are free. I come from Texas which also has great parks but they are not free. There are so many around here I can go every weekend. I especially love the trails and especially loves the parks that are big enough that the trails take you away from the noises of the road. Wonderful parks. I have been blown away and I've only been to 4 so far!

**50.** Additional kayak rentals on the larger Clearfork Lake with sand bars and/or something to make it easier to get boats into and out of the water. Women-friendly life vests. All-inclusive playgrounds to replace the old playgrounds. Close the McAdoo trail to horses. The trail was poorly planned and has sections that never dry out. The horses are constantly causing damages to the trail. Additional pack-in sites on Opossum Hollow trail. Open the Special Use Area up to walk-in camping. Remove the golf course!! How is this a natural resource? Informational kiosks at new locations like the natural area/special use area. Update the current kiosks! One is destroyed from squirrels. Update the Visitor Center. The displays are the same from the 90's! Outdoor classroom for school groups and programming would be great. What is going on with Camp Shawnee? It looks run down and is a unique cultural resource. Money should be appropriated to restoring it! If the group camp isn't being used as such, it should be used as something else. Like renting the cabins/pods out. Add cook grills to the cabin areas and treat it like a campground. Bobwhite needs AC added to the cabins and dining hall. We need a disc golf course!

**51.** Knob Noster needs the campground updated. MO taxes pay for day use..RV campers pay an additional fee. It would be nice if some of that revenue went into upgrading the campground since those are the ones paying.

**52.** Need a swimming hole or small access with bathroom and hand washing facilities

**53.** I love the Ranger talks. Very informative. Nature hikes for the kids would be nice.

**54.** Love them!

**55.** Have really enjoyed all the MO State Parks. Love camping and kayaking.

**56.** Puncheons in the low lying trail areas are much-needed

**57.** I love visiting them.

**58.** Keep up the great work

**59.** I enjoy the state parks. They are the only place we choose to camp because of the activities and family fun. The fact that our money goes to the conservation is a plus.

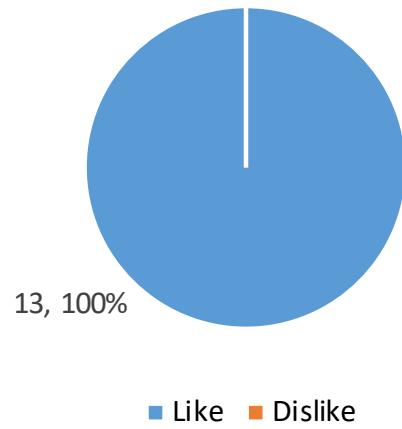
**60.** More handicap accessible trails and fishing areas for seniors and handicap. Better grooming... mow, mow, mow. Missouri lacks State Parks in Western side of the state.

**61.** We stayed here while attending the State Fair. More full hook ups, al ot of the state parks have none except the camp host. With COVID, more people would visit if they didn't have to use the shower house.

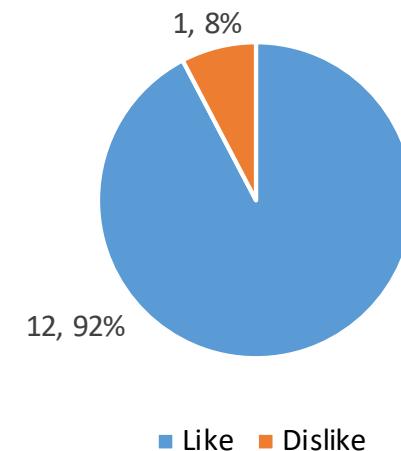
**62.** I love the park, but haven't been to visit in a long time. It's not because it is missing anything. I just don't think to go and am lazy! Maybe hosting some guided walks or storytelling tours would be nice. Thanks for all you do! I no longer live in Warrensburg, but come back regularly (until covid stopped my travel). Next time I'm back, I'll plan a morning in the park.

**63.** It is good.

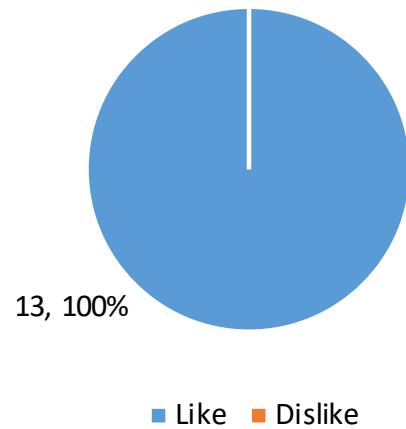
**Continue Spirit Trail east through the park**



**Change the area use of Shawnee Group Camp to Day-Use/Lodging**



**Connect the McAdoo Trail to Shawnee Group Camp**





**CDP Alternative Comments:**

- 1.** I really like the three proposals, especially the first two. Extending the Spirit Trail will be great for the park, Warrensburg, and surrounding areas. And I love that idea of being able to rent one of the cabins for a night or weekend, with a small group of friends. Great idea!

**Comments/suggestions regarding Knob Noster State Park:**

- 1.** Please, more trails for horseback riding.
- 2.** Encourage you to use the Warrensburg Chamber of Commerce "Community Calendar" to post major events: <https://www.warrensburg.org/calendar/>. Contact the chamber at 660-747-3168 or chamber@warrensburg.org for details about how to add your events.

- 3.** The sooner the Spirit Trail becomes continuous through the park, the better.
- 4.** Air condition the dinning lodge and recreation hall at Camp Bob White.

**Comments/suggestions regarding Missouri state parks and historic sites:**

- 1.** Give state park and historic site tours for school children and families. Possible money generating activity.
- 2.** THANK YOU for the work you do to preserve these critical places!
- 3.** More historic sites concerning the history of slavery in Missouri are needed.